

Grassroots Festival at Home in Old Ottawa South

By Grace Smith

Planning is well underway for the 6th edition of the Ottawa Grassroots Festival. The Grassroots Festival is a family-friendly gathering of folk music, dance and spoken word. The great news is they will be returning to the same venue as last year – Southminster United Church, in Old Ottawa South. Even better, the venue has confirmed they are happy to host the event through to 2019. “It’s a great location that is conducive to an event like ours with good-sized rooms for workshops and smaller stages.” said Festival Producer, Bob

Chelsey June an Algonquin Cree Métis Woman from Ottawa and Jaaji an Inuk Mohawk man from Nunavik and Kahnawake. Despite polar opposite backgrounds, Twin Flames found a common musical language. They won Aboriginal Songwriters of the year at the Canadian Folk Music Awards 2016, and will be opening for Ken Whiteley and the Beulah Band at the festival.

Other headliners confirmed to date are Shout Sister! Ottawa Choir, and The Durham County Poets on Friday evening, April 21. Shout Sister! sings a fun variety of music from pop and Motown, to folk, to a touch of



Ken Whiteley and The Beulah Band will headline at the Ottawa Grassroots Festival in April 2017.



“Twin Flames,” a duo of Jaaji and Chelsey June. PHOTO BY CAROLE RIVET

Nesbitt. “The central location and the accessibility of Southminster makes it ideal for everyone to get to and the acoustics in Sanctuary where all our evening performances are scheduled are marvellous.”

The festival’s headliner announcements include the multi-award winning Canadian folk/roots singer-songwriter, Ken Whiteley and The Beulah Band on Saturday night (April 22). Deeply rooted in traditional North American folk music, Whiteley and the band have performed together for over 10 years! They will deliver songs rich in roots, blues, gospel, swing, string and jug band sounds.

Twin Flames is a captivating duo that combines two accomplished and very unique singer songwriters

country and blues and pack venues, wherever they perform. “We have had the Shout Sister! Ottawa Choir perform at the Ottawa Grassroots Festival as part of our daytime programming, which is completely free to the public.” said Bob Nesbitt, Festival Producer. “Their unique method of welcoming singers of all abilities is a winning formula and is a perfect match to what our festival values. They are a lot of fun and are back by popular demand!” exclaims Nesbitt.

Durham County Poets are a lively and soulful five-piece folk and roots band from Southwest Quebec’s Chateauquay Valley that performs an eclectic blend of blues, folk and rock with tinges of country, gospel and swing tossed in for good measure.



The Shout Sister! Ottawa Choir.

PHOTO BY JAKE MORRISON

The daytime events on both Saturday and Sunday are FREE for everyone! The daytime workshops and performers will be announced in the New Year. Those that sign-up for the festival’s newsletter benefit from getting the info first. Visit the festival’s website at: www.ottawagrassrootsfestival.com to sign up. Tickets for Ottawa Grassroots evening performances are available online. They are priced to be affordable for families

(children 15 and under are free when accompanied by an adult).

The Ottawa Grassroots Festival prides itself in bringing together music of different genres and languages that encourages audience participation. This not-for-profit organization is run entirely by volunteers and prides itself for the participatory workshops it provides, cultivating community and nurturing inclusivity in a fun and friendly way.

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